

SPECIFICATION

RON H. McCOY

HOLSTER FOR LABELING AND PRICING GUNS

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/406,210, filed August 27, 2002.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention relates to a tool carrying device, and more particularly pertains to a tool holster or caddy for securely carrying tools such as labeling and pricing guns.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 The use of tool holding devices is known in the prior art. More specifically, tool holding devices heretofore devised and utilized for the purpose of containing tools therein are known to consist basically of familiar, expected and obvious structural configurations, notwithstanding the

myriad of designs encompassed by the crowded prior art which have been developed for the fulfillment of countless objectives and requirements.

By way of example, U.S. Patent No., 3,998,416; U.S. Patent No. 4,515,242; U.S. Patent No. 5,052,581; U.S. Patent No. 5,984,046; and U.S. Patent No. 5,501,382 all pertain to tool holding devices. While these devices fulfill their respective, particular objectives and requirements, the aforementioned patents do not describe a tool holder for adequately housing and containing pricing or labeling guns. Indeed, in the current manner for holding these devices a user typically holds such tools in pockets on the back of pants or tucked in the waist line of pants or a belt. Problems occur when the user is working and bending whereby the tool falls and becomes damaged.

With respect to the current art, specialized tool holders are known, such as the pliers holder disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 3,516,585, issued to Inwood. While the Inwood holder has a large cross sectional area, its use is largely limited due to the placement of a peg at its mouth to prevent the pliers from sliding completely through the holder. A tiltable knife holder is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,009,348, issued to Derkatz. The Derkatz device is limited to holding long, narrow objects and is closed at its lower end, thereby restricting its use to items less than a certain length.

Another example of a single purpose tool holder is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,232,136, issued to Unger. While a clip on the Unger device is open at both ends, the lower extremity of the device terminates at a shelf which prevents further downward movement of the retained tool. The Unger device is limited to use with a particular style of blade or scraper having a tubular handle of a specific diameter.

Another problem faced by designers of tool holders is the choice of material from which to construct the holder. In order to protect the article being held, the material of known devices has been limited to flexible designs. In U.S. Pat. No. 4,299,345, issued to Lanzl, a high density polypropylene material is used. Unfortunately, the resulting holder is of a very specialized shape and is useful only for storing and dispensing balls, not for storing a variety of hand tools, such as pricing or labeling guns. A similar result is achieved in the device disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 4,653,638, issued to Lackner et al., which shows a tool holder constructed of high density polyethylene. The Lackner device is restricted to the secure restraint and storage of tubular items only.

U.S. Pat. No. 4,828,154, issued to Clifton, Jr., discloses a rigid plastic, somewhat elliptical holster which is open at both ends. However, the Clifton, Jr., device teaches, as do other prior art holsters, that the lower open end must be of a substantially reduced diameter in order to properly secure the tool within the holster. The Clifton, Jr., design limits the use of the holster only to those gun type hand tools having a relatively wide grip portion and a substantially

narrower nose or tip. A similar holster is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 4,917,281, issued to Ostermiller.

Another problem with a generic tool holder is that it may be difficult to identify, at a glance, the tool being retained by the holder. One solution to this problem is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 4,852,930, issued to Agee, in which tools are decorated to match a similarly decorated tool holder. One problem with the Agee device is its lack of portability. Another problem is its failure to match an individual tool with the holder. Rather, the holder of Agee merely identifies a tool as being part of a set of tools associated with a particular holder. A colored box for nails and staples is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 4,928,823, issued to Campbell.

In this respect, the holster of the present invention departs from the conventional concepts and designs of the prior art, and in doing so provides an apparatus primarily developed for the purpose of containing labeling or pricing guns.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention essentially comprises a holster configured for receiving labeling or pricing guns therein. A holster or tool receiving portion is defined by a front panel and a rear panel spaced apart by two side panels, which together form a generally rectangular cross-sectional configuration. The holster configuration leaves open both an upper end for receiving the gun and

a lower end for allowing a portion of the gun to protrude downwardly. The upper edge of each side panel may have a concave shape which accommodates the handle of the gun in either a left or right position. An attachment means is provided for securing the holster to a user's belt or waist. The attachment means is defined by a or hook clip portion being integral with the rear panel at the upper end thereof. The clip portion runs generally parallel to the rear panel at an offset angle to provide comfort to the user while wearing the holster.

An alternative embodiment of the present invention generally comprises a front panel, a rear panel, two substantially similar side panels, and an attaching means. In this embodiment, the side panels are of a trapezoidal configuration while the front panel has a pair of flutes or upward projections defining a notch for receiving labeling guns such as those manufactured by Paxar. These guns typically have a knuckle guard to protect the user's hand.

In operation, the present invention allows a particular tool such as a pricing gun or label gun to be kept in its appropriate tool holster whenever the tool is not in use. As a result, such guns can be stored in a manner that minimizes the risk of accidents, as well as reduces time spent looking for tools. The holster portion is sized and configured to hold a variety of pricing or label guns. Moreover, the holster is configured so that it can be worn on either side of the user's body by the attachment means.

OBJECTS OF THE INVENTION

The principal object of the present invention is to provide an improved tool holster for adequately containing and securely holding a labeling or pricing gun.

5 It is another object of the present invention to provide an improved tool holster which is readily attachable to a user's belt or waistband.

It is also an object of the invention to provide an improved tool holster which can be interchangeably worn on a user's right or left side to accommodate both right-handed and left-handed users.

10 It is also an object of the invention to provide an improved tool holster which requires no extra mechanism to secure it to a user.

It is also an object of the invention to provide an improved tool holster which is durable and impact resistant.

It is another object of the present invention to provide an improved holster which is unitary, and may be easily and efficiently manufactured and marketed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The foregoing and other objects will become more readily apparent by referring to the following detailed description and the appended drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is an isometric view of a preferred embodiment of the invented holster.

5 Figure 2 is a top view of the holster embodiment of Figure 1.

Figure 3 is a rear view of the holster shown in Figure 1.

Figure 4 is a left side view of the holster shown in Figure 1, the right side view being a mirror image thereof.

Figure 5 is a front view of the holster shown in Figure 1.

10 Figure 6 is a bottom view of the holster shown in Figure 1.

Figure 7 is an isometric view of an alternative embodiment of the invented holster.

Figure 8 is a top view of the holster shown in Figure 7.

Figure 9 is a rear view of the holster shown in Figure 7.

Figure 10 is a left side view of the holster shown in Figure 7, the right side view being a mirror image thereof.

Figure 11 is a front view of the invented holster shown in Figure 7.

5 Figure 12 is a bottom view of the holster shown in Figure 7.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The invented tool holder is an integral piece of molded, rigid or semi-rigid plastic that will not scratch objects against which it comes into contact. Also, as compared to more pliable holsters made of leather or the like, the rigid holster of the present invention is easier to use because it does not collapse when the tool is removed. The tool holder is also relatively inexpensive to manufacture and it is durable because of its integral, one piece configuration.

The present invention is unitary in construction and is made from a plastic or elastomeric or thermoplastic material or any combination thereof. By unitary, it is meant that the present invention is formed as one continuous apparatus as opposed to separate parts which are joined to form one apparatus. Suitable plastics are recycled plastics, injection molded plastics,

reinforced plastics or the like. The plastic must be rigid or semi-rigid, and may be modified with impact modifiers such as styrene-butadiene, or hardeners. The preferred plastics are polypropylene, polystyrene, acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene (ABS), polyvinylchloride, polyvinylfluoride, acrylic copolymers, polyvinyl butyrate, polycarbonate, polymethacrylate, polyesters, ionomeric ethylene/methacrylic acid copolymers, polyurethanes, and ethylene propylene diene monomer (EPDM).

The configuration of the holster can differ in size and shape to accommodate different designs and characteristics of pricing and label guns. The thickness of the material which is employed is not a critical limitation although it should be recognized that for a larger and stronger holster, a thicker material should be employed and for a smaller, more flexible holster, a thinner material may be employed. Preferably, the plastic material should have a wall thickness of from about 0.05 to 0.15 inches, and for most holster applications this thickness is preferably from about 0.08 to 0.13 inches.

Referring now to Figures 1 through 6, a holster 10 includes a tool cavity that functions to hold a tool, such as a pricing or labeling gun. The holster 10 includes a hook portion 18 for engaging the holster 10 to a belt of a user, so that the holster 10 may be worn at or near the user's waist. The tool cavity portion of the holster 10 is defined by a generally trapezoidally shaped front wall panel 12, a back or rear wall panel 14, and a pair of side wall panels 16, 16a. The wall panels 12, 14, 16, 16a have substantially uniform wall thicknesses. The side wall portions 16,

16a have a generally rectangular configuration. As seen in Figure 1, the side walls may each have a top edge 20 which is slightly concave in shape.

5 The walls 12, 14, 16, 16a of the first portion cooperate to define a holster cavity 24 having a substantially rectangular cross-section that is suitably dimensioned to accommodate a variety of hand held tools, particularly pricing and labeling guns. The greatest lateral dimension of the cavity 24 is approximately four inches and the greatest width of the cavity 24 is approximately two inches. The rear wall panel 14 includes a bend or crease 22 near the midpoint of its height which causes the upper portion thereof to extend longitudinally from the lower portion at an offset angle so that when the holster 10 is affixed to a belt or user's waist band, it comfortably fits. This arrangement is particularly advantageous in promoting stability and reducing wear of the holster.

10 The cavity 24 of the holster 10 has an open top leading to the interior of cavity 24 into which the tool is inserted, and an open bottom which permits a portion of the hand tool, such as the forward end or the handle, to project downwardly (see Figure 7). The manufacture of the present invention and configuration thereof allows the user to wear the holster 10 on either the right or left side, which will accommodate either right handed or left handed users.

15 The hook portion of the holster 10 comprises an attachment means 18. The attachment means is preferably a clip or hook which is formed by bending or molding the upper portion of the rear wall downwardly, resulting in a flat hook panel 28 nearly parallel to the rear wall panel

14 or slightly angled from the rear wall of the holster 10. If angled, the downwardly extending hook panel 28 should form an angle with the rear wall panel 14 no greater than 15 degrees. Other suitable attachment systems can be employed, if desired. The use of the preferred hook or clip reduces costs of manufacture and simplifies the method of use, wherein the clip simply slides
5 onto a belt or waist band of the user, or engages a pocket. Alternatively, the attaching means can be hooked over any convenient item, including, without limitation, a wire, strap, rope, or other hanger device. The hook panel 28 extends downwardly from the top of rear panel 14 at least 1.75 inches, by preferably at least 2 inches for proper retention of the holster by the user.

In operation, the holster is placed in a convenient location for receiving the tool which it
10 is to hold. The holster can engage, for example, a belt, a strap, a pocket, or the waist band of a garment. This provides ready access to the tool, as well as a ready receptacle for the tool when it is not in use.

An alternative embodiment of the present invention is shown in Figures 7 through 12. The alternative holster embodiment is constructed according the principles of the invention stated
15 above, and is designated by reference numeral 100. The holster 100 includes a first portion that functions to hold a tool, such as a pricing or labeling gun. The holster 100 also includes a second portion of functions to secure the holster 100 to a belt of a person, so as the holster 100 may be worn about the person's waist (not shown). The first portion of the holster 100 includes a front wall panel 120 having a pair of flutes 200 located at the top portion thereof defining a notch 220,

a back rear wall panel 140, and a pair of side wall panels 160, 160a. The wall panels 120, 140, 160, 160a of the first portion all have substantially uniform wall thicknesses. As seen in Figure 7, the side wall portions 160, 160a have a generally trapezoidal configuration with top edge 164 being slightly longer in length than bottom edge 166.

5 The walls 120, 140, 160, 160a of the first portion cooperate to define a holster cavity 240 having a substantially rectangular cross-section that is suitably dimensioned to accommodate a variety of hand held tools, particularly pricing and labeling guns. The greatest lateral dimension of the cavity 240 is approximately four inches and the greatest width of the cavity 240 is approximately two inches. The rear wall panel 140 includes a hump or crease 260 at its
10 approximate center which causes the upper portion thereof to extend longitudinally from the lower portion at an offset angle so that once the holster 100 is affixed to a belt or person's waist, it comfortably fits. This arrangement is particularly advantageous in promoting stability and reducing wear of the holster 100.

15 The cavity 240 of the holster 100 includes an open top leading to an inside cavity 240 into which the tool is inserted, and an open bottom which permits the forward end or handle portion of the hand tool to project downwardly. Again, the manufacture of the present invention and design thereof allows the user to wear the holster 100 on either the right or left side. Moreover, in this embodiment the walls are configured for receiving labeling guns such as those

manufactured by Paxar. These guns have a knuckle guard to protect the user's hand, thus a larger cavity 240 is required.

As with the preferred embodiment, the second portion of the holster 100 includes an attachment means 180. The attachment means 180 is preferably a clip which includes a flat panel substantially co-planer with the rear wall panel 104 of the holster 100 portion. However, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that other suitable attachment systems can be employed.

The use of the preferred clip reduces costs of manufacture and simplifies the method of use, wherein the clip simply slides onto a belt or waist band of the user.

The side walls can be vertically oriented as shown in Figures 9 and 11, or inclined inwardly as shown in Figures 3 and 5, or they can be inclined outwardly. The front and rear walls can be substantially vertical or they can be inclined slightly inwardly or outwardly.

SUMMARY OF THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE OBJECTS OF THE INVENTION

From the foregoing, it is readily apparent that I have invented an improved tool holster for adequately containing and securely holding a labeling or pricing gun, which is readily attachable to a user's belt or waistband, which can be interchangeably worn on a user's right or left side to accommodate both right-handed and left-handed users, which requires no extra

mechanism to secure it to a user, which is durable and impact resistant, which is unitary, and which may be easily and efficiently manufactured and marketed.

It is to be understood that the foregoing description and specific embodiments are merely illustrative of the best mode of the invention and the principles thereof, and that various
5 modifications and additions may be made to the apparatus by those skilled in the art, without departing from the spirit and scope of this invention, which is therefore understood to be limited only by the scope of the appended claims.